

**TESTIMONY OF HERBERT FURHMAN
TO THE CONNECTICUT LEGISLATIVE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
March 11, 2010**

**Public Hearing Re: Workers' Compensation Benefits for
Hazardous Duty Workers.**

Good afternoon honorable members of the Legislature. Thank you for allowing me to make this presentation before the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Herbert Furhman. I reside in New Milford, Connecticut, and am a 19-year veteran of the State Department of Correction. I currently serve at Garner Correction Institution, a maximum security mental health prison. I am also a Union Steward and Workers' Compensation Representative for AFSCME Council 4 Local 1565, the president of the Gaylordsville Volunteer Fire Department, and a retired 23-year part-time certified police officer for the Town of Washington under the CT State Police.

I urge you to vigorously oppose any elimination or reduction of workers' compensation benefits for state employees within the hazardous duty classification.

I certainly do not have to explain to you the reasoning or history for providing hazardous duty workers' compensation benefits to those who place their lives on the line every day for the citizens of Connecticut. I know you are aware of the ever present dangers correctional officers face daily, as they work with aggressive anti-social inmates, many times in combative situations. You know the hazardous conditions our state police and state firefighters face as they save lives and protect property.

Due to our roles in Corrections, hundreds of our personnel have been injured in the line of duty. Thank goodness, most return to work and normal lives following treatment.

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Up until recently, the department had only one *Recuperative Post Program* to place injured staff back to work in non-inmate locations. Only a few locations qualified for our officers and counselors to work in, limiting the number of people who were able to return back to work.

Last year, in an effort to get more employees back to work sooner, our three Correctional Union Locals worked closely with our DOC senior management to create a pilot program known as the *Light Duty Program*. Many additional work areas were identified in every correctional facility and parole office, increasing opportunities for people who were able to return back to work through this program.

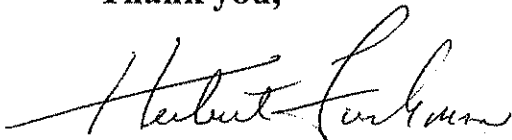
Now, several months later, there are scores of returning workers, still under some form of medical care, but now performing meaningful alternative work at their duty stations. These locations include the Records Division, Lobby and Reception and various Control Center posts.

The bottom line is with these two programs in place, worker productivity has significantly increased, AND we are saving the State thousands and thousands of dollars from the workers' compensation budget.

The men and women of the Connecticut Department of Correction are, without a doubt, serving the best interests of the State by returning back to work quicker and saving money for the state.

We ask you to oppose Governor Rell's proposal to eliminate the current hazardous duty workers' compensation benefits.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herbert G. Fuhman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Herbert" being more prominent than the last name "Fuhman".

Herbert G. Fuhman

**AFSCME Local 1565 Workers' Compensation Representative
Union Steward
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